

NOTES ON THEORETICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND GENEALOGY AS FIELDS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION: FIELDS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

It was Margaret Mead who defined anthropology as humanity and science, in particular a social science “although never only a social science, because in anthropology man, as part of the natural world, as a biological creature, is not separated from man as a consumer or producer, member of a group, or possessor of certain psychological faculties” (1972:3). One of the most effective and recognized feminist anthropologist concludes: “Anthropology is art. The research skills which go into good field work are as complex as the skills of the musician or a surgeon; a disciplined awareness of self is as essential” (1972:3).

To this classical synthesis of anthropology we can add the opinion of S. Fax who looked at anthropology as “the most world-wide of sciences uniting scholars of mankind wherever they are” (1972: 61), as well as and the graduate increase value of the function of anthropology in education and in our everyday life in the post-modern world. In other words, anthropology is one of the global sciences in our globalizing social environment offering “holistic perspective and a long-term commitment to understanding the human species in all its varieties” (Haviland et al. 2005: 24) and to practice humanities.

In the contemporary historiography there is a variety in classifications of the anthropology. One of the popular models has been proposed by W. Haviland: cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, paleoanthropology and applied anthropology (Haviland et al. 2005). The field of applied anthropology as an opportunity of scientific management of social situation to solve practical problems (Peattie 1972: 488; Haviland et al. 2005: 457) can be accepted to be a practical aspect of any field of anthropology. In turn, another modern classification scheme is also popular: biological anthropology, archaeology, socio-cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology¹. For instance, the typical applied anthropology field such as forensic anthropology is an application of biological anthropology (Park 1999: 365 sq.). The author’s classification scheme includes but is not limited to the following fields of anthropology:

Theoretical anthropology

Archaeology

Linguistic anthropology

Biological anthropology (or Paleoanthropology)

Cultural anthropology (ethnography, ethnology, cognitive anthropology, psychological anthropology, sociological anthropology, historic anthropology, economic anthropology, etc.). In this case culture is accepted as a definer of any human practice.

Genealogy

This communication attempts to actualize the problems of classification of the anthropology as a science and social practice focusing on theoretical anthropology, a discipline that misses in some most recent classifications and offering some arguments for characteristics of genealogy as a field of anthropology.

THEORETICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The development of the theoretical anthropology as a metatheory and methodology for the other fields of anthropology is due to the fact that neither sociology nor philosophy could satisfy the increased request of the modern anthropology for a highly efficient science and social practice. The end of the Cold War (Schulzinger R.D., on-line) restricted the ideological character of the social sciences and the turn toward global science has required a strong integrated metatheory for any anthropological fields (Kearney 2004). Especially clearly, when the question comes about the societal models, the cultural anthropology itself cannot explain in depth either the so-called barrel (in fact dialectic and materialistic) three-level model (infrastructure, social structure and superstructure) (Haviland et al. 2005: 39) or any other societal constructions. The theoretical anthropology develops as general concepts (Kearney 2004) or specialized, such as the anthropology of economy (Gudeman 2001), anthropology of everydayness (Nikolova, this volume), anthropology of culture change (Featherstone 1992) etc. Ethics and professional standards have become special issues in the theoretical approaches as well (Fluehr-Lobban 2003).

Archaeology (Fagan & DeCorse 2005), linguistic anthropology and biological anthropology or paleoanthropology (Park 1999) are independent scholar disciplines with their own methodology, theories and objectives. Despite the development of the cultural anthropology as a “holistic story” about all cultures during all times, it still heavily depends on ethnography, at least in the recent textbook versions which is limited to the traditional cultures. This fact confirms that even the cultural anthropology needs metatheory to provide the more common principals of understanding and explanation of the cultural processes. As a whole, such metatheory is the socio-cultural theory or socio-cultural theories in historical perspectives (Featherstone 1992). The second aspect is theorization of different problems of cultural anthropology - everydayness, the real life, gender, etc.

GENEALOGY

Genealogy is another distinct field in the author’s classification scheme of anthropology. This is one of the most dynamically developed social disciplines in the world. The world genealogy capital, Salt Lake

¹ See e.g. at <http://www.anthropology.emory.edu/Linganth/>

City, and especially the Family History Library in this city², provides an exclusive opportunity for global genealogy research while Family History Library without doubt it is one of the contemporaneous wonderlands in the world. Based on original records, organized genealogy societies and other organization, extremely developed Internet database and communication opportunity, and rich family history secondary records, genealogy integrates all three components that characterize the other disciplines within anthropology: scholarly and academic data-base, knowledge and research, humanistic function and social practice.

As an independent discipline genealogy includes several subfields: reconstruction of the family trees and competing family group sheets, family histories, genetic genealogy, etc.

To find your ancestors

means to work with a variety of records: church registers, Censuses, Civil registrations, emigration and immigration and many other primary and secondary sources. Many people examine yourself their family history and ancestry but neither handwriting (e.g. Minert 2001) nor knowledge of the specifics of the different types of records and from different regions (e.g. Anderson & Thode 2000) can be learned easily, so in most cases precise genealogy work requires good educational background, professional genealogical skills and critical and analytical thinking.

Humanistic character and social practice

With respect to genealogy both these functions are overlapped since searching for our ancestors is the way to be involved in the enculturation process in both its aspects - as connecting generations and integrating the individual into the society. In fact everybody who searches for his/her ancestors is doing genealogy work while the term genealogist in most cases is reserved for the professional genealogists.

Unfortunately, ignoring the difficulties by searching for the origin of certain ancestry is in some cases a reason for wrongly extended lines. The peculiarities of early records - missing of the mother's name in the birth records or of the parents' names in the marriage records and the age of the groom and of the bride, missing of essential other information than the age in the death records in some records - creates many research problems. Indirect evidence should provide valuable information but often they are controversial. For all these reasons, genealogy cannot be developed without at least the assistance of professionals that in turn confirms its primary academic character. Beyond doing genealogy research, genealogy as a social practice develops solidarity, humanities and friendship between people living close and in distance.

Genealogy and ethnography and historical anthropology

The role of genealogy has been acknowledged in many specific anthropological/ethnographic and historical studies. The genealogy influence is in using of genealogical method (Tyler 1969: 94 sq.; Kottak 1991: 26-27) in the ethnographic and theoretical research of kinship (Tyler 1969: 191-311; Starr 1972: 439-454; Kottak 1991: 201-238; Haviland et al. 2005: 258-281) while there are also some common elements between family histories as a systematic research and life

histories as "recollection of lifetime of experience" to provide more "ultimate and personal cultural portraits" (Kottak 1991: 28) or to demonstrate the differences in the individual perceptions, contributions and reactions to the culture processes. Recently G. Childs (2003) pointed to the fact that thanks to studying genealogies it has been cleared up misconceptions about past population dynamics in China. During our systematic research of records from several villages in Croatia we were able to document co-existence of patrilineal and matrilineal traditions. In the catalogue of the Family History Library (on-line) there are specific subjects that refer to historic aspects of genealogy - immigration, genealogy, history, etc.

The difference between genealogy on one hand, and ethnography and anthropology, on the other, is that while the goal of genealogy is reconstructing family trees and build systematic family histories, ethnography and historical anthropology use genealogical methods for genealogical notation in order to define and discovery principals of kinship, descent, and marriage which are "the social blocks of non-industrial cultures" in the so-called kin-based societies (Kottak 1991:26), as well as of households as elementary social units by using Census data and comparative/typological analyses (Otterbein 1972: 131), etc. Detailed account of the "classical" genealogical method has been offered by Tyler (1969: 94-118), also defined as "ethnogenealogical method".

CONCLUSION

Development of different fields of anthropology during the last decades improve and scholar and humanistic characters of this social discipline. While theoretical anthropology is in close relations with the common development of the concept of the culture and society, the genealogy becomes more and more integrated with historical anthropology and integrated social practices of research in depth and sharing information between people all over the world. Its global character make the last close to anthropology and increase essentially its role in the enculturation process.

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In 1894-1896 Emma Burbank Ayer wrote hundreds of letters during her joint trip with her spouse, Edward E. Ayer, in Cairo and related places to gather archaeological valuable objects for the Field Museum in Chicago. The collected finds by Edward E. Ayer, the first president of Chicago Field Museum, are the foundation of the huge Egypt Archaeological collection.

For a few years her distant relative Baerbel K. Johnson (Family History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah)¹, one of the best genealogists in German research and handwriting, has been deciphering and analyzing the letters of her distant relative that provide many details and ethnographic information about Egypt in later 19th century and peculiarities in collecting antique findings.

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1-2. A guest-lecture in Salt Lake Community College (ANTH 1030, Redwood Campus, Spring 2005 Semester). For the first time Baerbel K. Johnson reports some of her anthropological findings in the letters of Emma Burbank Ayer .
URL: <http://www.ianthropology.org/slcclcbjohnson2005.html>

¹<http://www.familysearch.org>